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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART V. SOUTH WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Section 2 - Afghanistan

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

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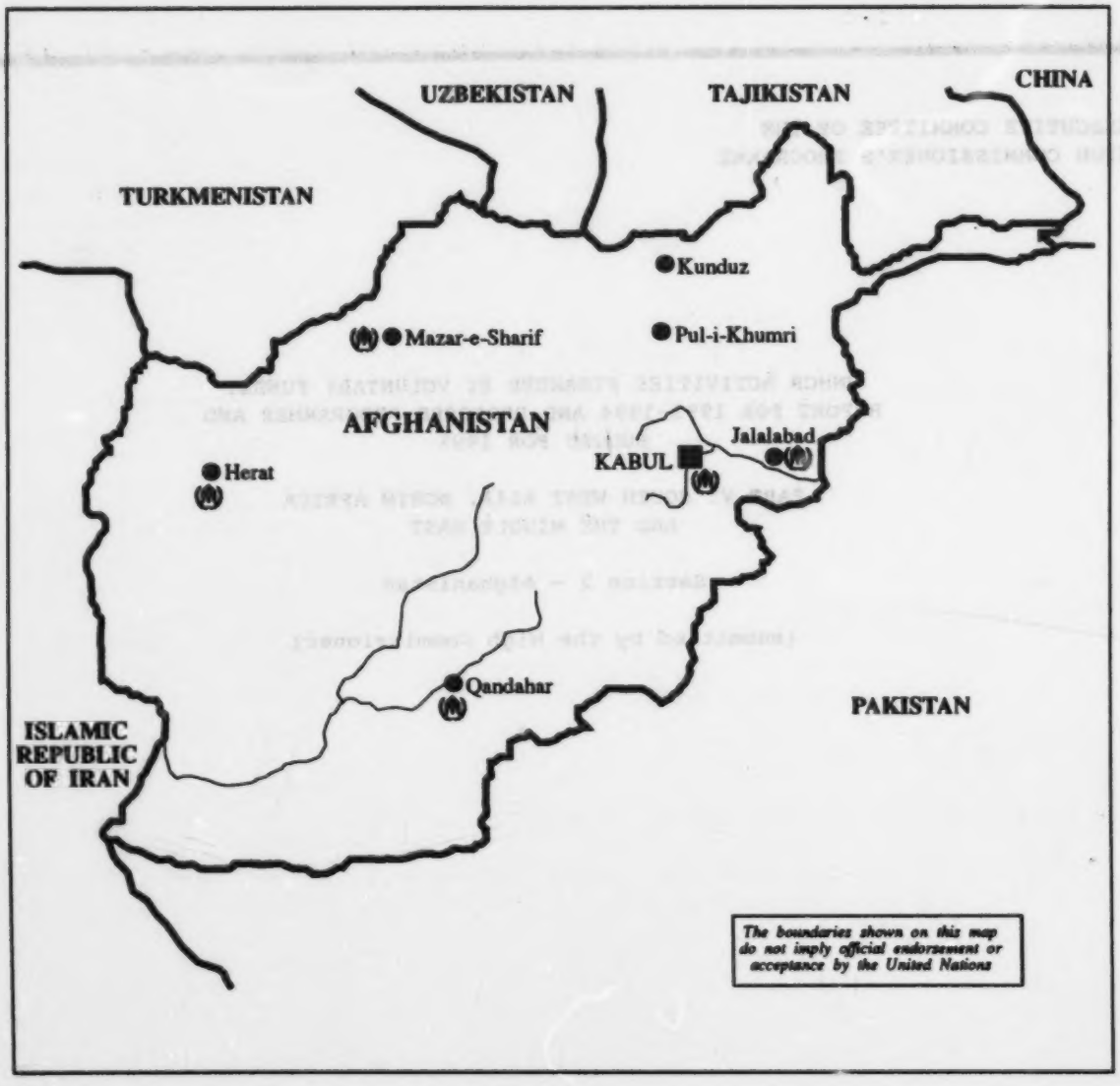
AFGHANISTAN



V.2 AFGHANISTAN

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population and others of concern to UNHCR

1. At 31 December 1993, Afghanistan hosted a refugee population of 39,000 Tajiks, 24,000 of whom were located in Sakhi Camp outside Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh province, and an estimated 15,000 in Kunduz province, where security conditions severely restrict access and assistance by UNHCR. Twenty mandate refugees, mainly Iranians and Iraqis, live in Mazar-i-Sharif. In addition, UNHCR provided assistance in Mazar-i-Sharif to almost 10,000 internally displaced persons located in three camps (6,623 persons), public buildings (548), and in Hairatan (680) and Sheberghan (1,777). Further south in Pul-i-Khumri, Baghlan province, UNHCR coordinates the assistance to 5,000 displaced persons from Kabul in two camps and three public buildings. The breakdown of the population of concern to UNHCR was as follows:

Country of Origin	Number 31/12/92	Number 31/12/93	Per cent M	F	C	Location	Type of Assistance
Tajikistan	60,000	24,000 15,000	39	38 na	23	Sakhi (Balkh) Kunduz	emergency assistance repatriation
Various	25	20		na		Mazar	care & maintenance
Afghanistan	na na	10,000 5,000		na na		Mazar Pul-i-Khumri	care & maintenance

na: not available

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

2. On 1 March 1993, the Government of Tajikistan announced an amnesty to include the majority of refugees in Afghanistan. A quadripartite Commission for Repatriation was established in early May with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR as members. As of the end of 1993, 6,711 refugees were part of an organized return from Sakhi Camp via Uzbekistan. In April, a transit centre was established at Sher Khan Bandar on the Amu River to facilitate the return of 8,913 refugees crossing back into Tajikistan. Following an assessment of the population in Sakhi camp, the number of residents has been revised downwards to 18,858 with effect from 1 May 1994.

3. The delivery of assistance to communities of concern in Afghanistan was curtailed following a 1 February 1993 incident in Jalalabad which resulted in the

deaths of three United Nations staff. International UNHCR staff in Jalalabad and Kandahar were withdrawn and in Mazar and Herat staffing levels were sharply reduced in response to the overall security situation. A shortage of funds in the final quarter of the year resulted in a further reduction of programme activity. Nonetheless, 33,267 families in seven provinces benefited from assistance with shelter reconstruction. Bridges and roads along routes of return were reconstructed, 387 kilometres of irrigation channels were rehabilitated in four provinces, and 57 shallow wells constructed to provide communities with safe drinking water.

4. The resumption and escalation of fighting in Kabul on 1 January 1994 triggered the flight of tens of thousands of families from the city. The current round of hostilities has been of a longer duration and greater intensity than any previous outbreak since the change of Government in April 1992. It has been reported that as many as 632,000 persons have been rendered homeless, half of whom have sought shelter in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman and Parwan. As at 1 May 1994, 90,000 displaced persons were being assisted in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, under a joint United Nations approach, with UNHCR having responsibility for provision of relief items, registration and camp management. At its height, the influx to Jalalabad reached a rate of 1,500 persons arriving daily from Kabul. They have joined 35,000 persons previously displaced from earlier conflicts in Kabul and the surrounding areas.

Programme objectives and priorities

Tajik refugees

5. For Tajik refugees in Afghanistan, the Office of the UNHCR Chief of Mission, through the Sub-office in Mazar-i-Sharif and in coordination with the Office of the Head of Mission in Tajikistan, will pursue opportunities for voluntary repatriation while providing care and maintenance. The initial return of 15,624 persons undertaken in 1993, coupled with improved conditions in Tajikistan, enhance the prospects for repatriation in 1994. If the security situation in Tajikistan continues to improve, repatriation, both organized and spontaneous, is expected to reduce the refugee population remaining in Afghanistan substantially. In 1995, a programme for local settlement will be introduced for those refugees unwilling or unable to return to Tajikistan.

Afghan returnees

6. Assistance for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from the neighbouring countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan will continue to be provided through a package of cash, food and subsidized transport in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The repatriation assistance programme will respond to the needs of returnees and will be continously adjusted to the prevailing situation. Arrangements will be improved to ensure that assistance continues to benefit those who have expressed an intention to return and who are in the process of repatriating. Efforts are also being made to address the needs of women, children and vulnerable groups.

7. UNHCR will continue to monitor the voluntary character of the returnee movements, and focus on reintegration projects targeted at returnee-affected communities in Afghanistan. As part of the United Nations programme responding to the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, UNHCR will focus primarily on quick impact projects (QIPs) in the sectors of shelter, drinking water, irrigation and rehabilitation of transport networks. Emphasis will be placed on labour intensive food-for-work activities implemented through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in close cooperation with United Nations agencies.

Internally Displaced Persons

8. The principal objective of providing assistance to internally displaced persons will be to facilitate their return to a normal life in their place of origin. If this is not possible, UNHCR assistance will aim at achieving their integration within existing communities. Within the framework of assistance to communities in Afghanistan, small-scale rehabilitation projects, primarily the provision of safe drinking water and assistance with shelter construction, will be undertaken to ensure the successful integration of displaced persons with a progressive phase out of UNHCR involvement. Assistance in case of any future displacements, will focus on the provision of relief items to meet immediate domestic needs through joint arrangements among the United Nations agencies, under the overall responsibility of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA).

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

9. The precarious security situation in Afghanistan greatly complicates medium to long-term planning. UNHCR maintains a flexible approach which will provide for a periodic or short-term presence in areas of priority for refugee return as security conditions allow. International staff assigned to Kabul have been evacuated to Pakistan since 1992 and withdrawn from the Sub-Offices in Jalalabad and Kandahar since early 1993. Although a short-term presence has been established periodically the prospects for a permanent return in the near future are dim. Offices will continue to function in Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat, although movement by staff is at times severely restricted.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

10. Most activities will continue to be directly implemented and monitored by the UNHCR field offices in Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar. Transport for returnees inside Afghanistan is carried out by IOM. Rehabilitation projects are implemented through agreements with United Nations agencies and NGOs. For Tajik refugees and displaced persons in northern Afghanistan, NGOs provide programmes to address specific needs in the fields of health, water/sanitation and social services, with particular attention paid to the needs of women, children and vulnerable groups.

11. The allocation and coordination of all food assistance is handled by WFP. WFP will provide a mixed food basket for Tajik refugees in 1994 which totals 8,468 metric tons and consists of wheat, rice, chick-peas, sugar and oil. Provisions are also made to assist 27,000 Tajiks, as they undertake repatriation, through the

delivery of a total of 746 metric tons of mixed supplies. WFP further provides 2,107 metric tons of wheat for displaced persons in the north.

General Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

12. Assistance for care and maintenance has been provided by UNHCR to some 24,000 Tajik refugees at Sakhi camp out of an estimated total of 70,000 who have entered Afghanistan since December 1992. In addition to food support from WFP, refugees have received assistance in terms of health services, water and sanitation, shelter construction, and relief supplies. In order to meet these requirements, $ 4,057,400 were allocated from the 1993 Emergency Fund. Prior to 1 April 1993, assistance had also been provided to refugees in the Imam Sahib area, Kunduz province; however, the deteriorating security situation severely restricted UNHCR access and resulted in the withdrawal of staff from the province and a suspension of UNHCR assistance activities.

13. The spontaneous and assisted repatriation of Tajik refugees to Tajikistan began in May 1993, shortly after the first meeting of the Quadripartite Commission, which consisted of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and UNHCR. A total of 6,711 persons were assisted to return from Sakhi camp and 8,913 from Kunduz province. At the peak of the repatriation movement, an outbreak of cholera among the refugee population prompted the Government of Uzbekistan to close the border to returnees transiting through the country, thus forcing a suspension of organized return movements.

14. Third country nationals identified as Mandate refugees receive a monthly subsistence allowance and assistance with medical needs and departure expenses under care and maintenance, while options for a durable solution were pursued. In 1993, three additional cases (eight persons) were granted refugee status by the Office, while two cases (two persons) departed.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

15. UNHCR will continue to pursue voluntary repatriation while ensuring that the basic needs of Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan are met under care and maintenance as of 1994, replacing earlier assistance provided under the 1993 Emergency Fund. Should the situation stabilize in Kunduz province, UNHCR is ready to resume assistance for Tajik refugees living in the area. UNHCR staff in Mazar-i-Sharif, Sakhi camp and Sher Khan Bandar transit centre will implement and monitor repatriation activities related to the provision of transport. Contingent on continued stability and an improved security situation in Tajikistan, provisions have been made for the repatriation of up to 20,000 refugees in 1994, for which an amount of $ 650,000 has been allocated from the 1994 General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Care and Maintenance

16. Given the precarious security situation in northern Afghanistan and the difficulties in predicting the number of Tajik refugees that will remain on Afghan soil at the beginning of 1995, an initial planning figure of 15,000 refugees has been submitted; this will be revised in the light of developments. The 1995 programme proposals for care and maintenance amount to $ 1,019.8 million, of which $ 997,800 will go towards covering the needs of the Tajik refugees, and the remaining $ 22,000 will go towards assisting the third country Mandate refugees.

Repatriation

17. It is recognized that, depending on the situation, greater numbers of Tajik refugees may return in 1994 than current projections would indicate. The initial submission for voluntary repatriation for 1995 will be finalized once an assessment of returns in 1994 has been made. Repatriation from Afghanistan will continue to focus on the provision of transport and basic food supplies at the time of departure.

Local Settlement

18. A programme enabling local integration of those refugees unwilling or unable to return to Tajikistan will be introduced in 1995, and is initially projected at $ 300,000. Emphasis will be placed on assistance with shelter construction, provision of water for irrigation and seed distribution to enable agricultural self-sufficiency.

Special Programmes

Afghanistan Repatriation Programme

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

19. The outbreak of serious clashes among rival political factions since the change of Government in Afghanistan has had a significant impact on the rate of repatriation. Following the return from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan of over 1.5 million Afghans in 1992, expectations were high that a continuing trend would see an additional one million persons return with UNHCR assistance in 1993. However, by year end, a total of 470,122 refugees had received assistance for their return to Afghanistan, 337,495 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 132,627 from Pakistan. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, border crosing points were increased from one to four locations. Preparations for a transit through Pakistan via Balochistan province for returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran were suspended indefinitely due to operational impediments.

20. On behalf of UNHCR, IOM has been operating a programme of subsidized transport to returnees since 1992. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, 90,231 individuals received assistance in proceeding to the border, while in Afghanistan 58,798 were transported from Herat to the northern provinces. From Pakistan,

28,413 individuals were provided with transport from the camps to their districts of origin in the northern provinces of Afghanistan. Particular attention was paid to meeting the transport needs of disabled returnees. The programme from Herat had to be suspended in mid-October due to deteriorating road conditions and increased insecurity which resulted in 66 deaths and 83 injuries on the road to Mazar-i-Sharif.

21. Security conditions and lack of sufficient funding had a serious impact on the implementation capacity of the programme in 1993. Localized conflicts in Jalalabad and Kandahar resulted in the withdrawal of international staff from these Sub-Offices, and conditions did not improve sufficiently in the remainder of the year to allow for their return. Agreements with United Nations agencies and NGOs for QIPs and de-mining activities had to be either reduced or cancelled in the final quarter of the year because of the unavailability of funds. Assistance provided by UNHCR included subsidies for transport from Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif, assisting with shelter reconstruction, and rehabilitation projects for drinking water, irrigation and road repair. Within the framework of assisting communities as a whole, programmes for internally displaced persons in northern Afghanistan provided improved shelter for winter conditions.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

22. Reintegration programmes and transport subsidies are expected to continue throughout 1994. The main emphasis will be on ther reconstruction of shelter and sectors which will assist with the revitalization of the local economies. Transport subsidies will target returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran for destinations in northern Afghanistan. Negotiations are currently underway with the authorities in Turkmenistan to allow for a transit operation which will avoid unsafe and insecure routes in Afghanistan.

23. The outbreak of hostilities in Kabul in January 1994 resulted in the massive displacement of the urban population to the relative stability of the rural provincial centres. An allocation of $ 3,565,000 from the 1994 Emergency Fund has enabled the office to meet the immediate needs of displaced persons in Jalalabad. A Consolidated United Nations Inter-Agency Appeal for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan launched in April 1994 includes a UNHCR component for $ 6.3 million to meet the needs of 20,000 internally displaced families, within the overall coordinated response of the United Nations.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

24. Given the uncertain political and security environment, it is at present impossible to ascertain realistically the level of assistance to be given. Should a political settlement be achieved which will provide a climate conducive for increased return, an expanded programme of assistance would be envisaged. The scope of activities and the rate of implementation are directly dependant on conditions which allow UNHCR to reach the communities affected by the return from neighbouring countries. The 1995 initial requirements for Afghanistan are based on trends identified under conditions prevailing in 1993 and 1994.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

25. Following the fatal shooting of United Nations staff outside Jalalabad in February 1993, international staff were withdrawn from the Sub-Office. Similar action was taken in Kandahar due to the instability of the area. Conditions did not sufficiently improve in the course of the year to allow staff to return to either of these locations or to Kabul. The fluid and changing situation throughout the year required the frequent relocation of staff, which resulted in periodic evacuations, as well as limitations placed on the number of United Nations staff permitted in any one location because of security problems.

26. In view of the above-mentioned security situation, UNHCR's field presence was reduced and it was decided not to fill vacant posts. In terms of changes in staffing levels, in Jalalabad, the international post of Administrative Assistant was discontinued with effect from 31 October 1993. In Kandahar, the international post of Administrative Assistant was converted into a local post, effective 1 December 1993. Consequently, there was a border-wide decrease in all administrative budget requirements, resulting in lower than expected expenditures under staff costs, non-staff costs and general operating expenses.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

27. The 1994 programme delivery and administrative support costs include provisions for the staffing and running costs of four Field Offices and one Office of the Chief of Mission in Kabul (temporarily relocated to Islamabad, Pakistan). Two local posts, namely of Programme Assistant and Senior Secretary were created effective 1 July 1994 in view of the continuing presence of the Office of the Chief of Mission, Kabul in Islamabad. The post of international Secretary was thus discontinued effective 1 January 1994. In Herat, two posts of Programme Officer and Field Officer were discontinued effective 1 January 1994.

28. In Mazar-e-Sharif, one post of Field Officer was created effective 1 January 1994 to be out-posted in Kunduz in connection with the presence of Tajik refugees in this location, while two posts of Programme Officer and Field Officer under the Afghan Repatriation Programme were discontinued on the same date. Maximum flexibility in staffing is required to allow for an international presence to be established in areas of priority as conditions permit. The prevailing circumstances require increased support for staff on evacuation, security provisions and transport by United Nations charter due to unsafe road conditions.

29. As a result of the decrease in staffing and the continuing reduced UNHCR presence stemming from the prevailing security situation in both Jalalabad and Kandahar, the revised requirements for programme delivery and administrative support costs are lower than the initial 1994 estimates under all budget chapters except for common staff costs, which have been budgeted at a higher level to take account of the more frequent rotation of staff in this hardship situation and the payment of mission subsistence allowance for the Kabul staff who remain evacuated in Islamabad. The revised projected costs are expected to meet all needs, unless the present fielding of missions to Jalalabad by UNHCR, in connection with the recently displaced persons mainly from Kabul, continues for longer than expected.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

30. It is anticipated that activities will be reduced as the return of a majority of the refugees to Tajikistan is completed. As a consequence, a gradual reduction in staffing will have to be considered in due course. A longer-term field presence will, however, be required in many areas of Afghanistan which are of concern to UNHCR, and where the establishment of an office is impractical. Given the trend in recent years in Afghanistan of worsening security conditions, it is difficult to predict when the Office of the Chief of Mission will be able to return and operate efficiently in Kabul. Until the situation improves significantly, the functions performed by the office will, of necessity, be carried out from Pakistan.

30. Under the circumstances, and given the uncertainty of the situation in Afghanistan, all posts as approved under the 1994 revised budget have been extended until the end of 1995. While non-staff costs and operating expenses are estimated to be generally lower than the revised 1994 requirements, overall needs in 1995 are slightly higher as it is expected that replacement vehicles for the Sub-Office in Herat and for the Office of the Chief of Mission, Kabul in Islamabad may need to be purchased. In addition, cost-sharing by United Nations agencies for the United Nations flight operations in the region is estimated to be higher, due to the possible increased use of this facility as a safer means of travel within Afghanistan.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN AFGHANISTAN

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
4,057.4	–	3,565.0	EMERGENCY FUND	–
15.0	30.0	1,202.0	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	1,019.8
–	–	650.0 a/	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
–	–	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	300.0
4,072.4	30.0	5,417.0	SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	1,319.8
4,072.4	30.0	5,417.0	TOTAL (1)	1,319.8
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
8,400.7	15,000.0	8,471.3	AFGHANISTAN REPATRIATION PROGRAMME	5,801.5
–	–	2,585.7	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	3,002.6
–	–	254.7	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	226.2
–	–	2,735.0	OTHER TRUST FUNDS Assistance to internally displaced persons	–
8,400.7	15,000.0	14,046.0	TOTAL (2)	9,030.3
12,473.1	15,030.0	19,463.7	GRAND TOTAL (1+2)	10,350.1

a/ allocated from the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation